

Sunset Ocean Painting

Complete Step by Step Companion Guide | Parts 1 and 2



Use this guide alongside the video lesson as a quick reference while you paint. The timestamps make it easy to return to a section whenever you want to watch a technique again.

CANVAS	10 x 20 inch pre primed stretched canvas
VIDEOS	Part 1: about 54 minutes Part 2: about 58 minutes
MEDIUM	Acrylic

Lesson Setup and Quick Reference

COLORS USED	Cerulean Blue, Quinacridone Magenta, Raw Umber, Titanium White, Naples Yellow, Cadmium Yellow, Yellow Ochre
BRUSHES	Round brush from my brush set, smaller round brush, larger brush, small brush, liner brush, flat brush
KEEP IN MIND	We will build this painting in layers. Do not worry about making an area perfect on the first pass. We will come back, adjust values, soften edges, strengthen color, and add detail as we go.

Part 1 | Building the Sunset Sky

Step 1: Mix the First Blue Gray Cloud Color

VIDEO	Part 1 0:41
PAINT MIX	Cerulean Blue + Raw Umber + tiny amount of Quinacridone Magenta + Titanium White
BRUSH	Round brush from my brush set
TECHNIQUE	Soft blue gray cloud mixture

Start with Cerulean Blue and a little Raw Umber. Add a tiny amount of Quinacridone Magenta, then begin adding Titanium White. Add a little more Magenta and White until you have a soft blue gray.

Keep this color fairly soft. We are just establishing the first cloud shapes, so there is no need to make them too heavy or opaque yet.

Step 2: Lay In the First Cloud Shapes

VIDEO	Part 1 1:17
PAINT MIX	First blue gray cloud mixture
BRUSH	Round brush
TECHNIQUE	Puffy shapes with softly scrubbed edges

Begin placing small, puffy cloud sections and angle them downward through the composition. Let them trail toward the upper corner and leave some open sky between the shapes.

As you reach the edges of the clouds, scrub lightly to soften them. Keep the shapes irregular. You do not want every cloud to have the same size or pattern.

Step 3: Warm the Lower Clouds

VIDEO	Part 1 4:28
PAINT MIX	Cloud mixture + more Quinacridone Magenta + Titanium White
BRUSH	Round brush
TECHNIQUE	Warm the lower cloud edges

As you work lower in the sky, add more Magenta to the mixture. Add White as needed so the color does not become too strong.

Bring just a few hints of this warmer color into the bottoms of the higher clouds. Keep it subtle. We want the feeling of sunset light catching the clouds without making the color too obvious.

Step 4: Finish the First Cloud Layer

VIDEO	Part 1 6:38
BRUSH	Round brush
TECHNIQUE	Establish the first layer

Finish filling in the main cloud shapes and flatten the lower edge where the foreground will eventually begin.

This is only our first pass. Concentrate on the overall movement of the clouds and leave the finer adjustments for the next layers.

Step 5: Fill the Open Sky

VIDEO	Part 1 6:54
PAINT MIX	Cerulean Blue + Raw Umber + Quinacridone Magenta + Titanium White, leaning slightly more blue
BRUSH	Round brush
TECHNIQUE	Very light pressure

Mix Cerulean Blue, Raw Umber, a little Magenta, and White again, but let this mixture lean a little more toward Cerulean Blue. Add enough White so it is close to the cloud color without being exactly the same.

Use very light pressure to fill the openings between the clouds. It is fine to overlap some of the cloud edges. We will come back and reestablish anything that gets lost.

Step 6: Reestablish the Cloud Shapes

VIDEO	Part 1 10:05
PAINT MIX	Cerulean Blue + Raw Umber + Quinacridone Magenta + Titanium White; openings: Titanium White + Cerulean Blue
BRUSH	Round brush
TECHNIQUE	Reestablish edges and openings

Remix Cerulean Blue, Raw Umber, Magenta, and White and bring back some of the cloud edges that were softened or covered. Adjust with a little more Blue or Magenta when needed.

Let the clouds become a little more connected toward the bottom while keeping the upper clouds more broken and airy. Use White with a little Cerulean Blue to brighten a few of the open sky areas.

Step 7: Add an Airy Texture Layer

VIDEO	Part 1 14:06
PAINT MIX	Cloud color + Titanium White, adjusted with Cerulean Blue
BRUSH	Round brush
TECHNIQUE	Light airy layering

Add another light layer over portions of the clouds. Bring in White gradually and add a little more Cerulean Blue if the mixture starts looking too gray.

Keep your pressure light. We are building texture and atmosphere here, not covering everything with another solid layer.

Step 8: Brighten a Few Sky Openings

VIDEO	Part 1 16:03
PAINT MIX	Titanium White + a little Cerulean Blue
BRUSH	Round brush
TECHNIQUE	Light pressure

Clean the brush and mix White with a little Cerulean Blue. Work back into some of the openings between the clouds.

Add more White in a few selected areas, but do not make every opening equally bright. A little variation will make the sky feel more natural.

Step 9: Build More Volume in the Clouds

VIDEO	Part 1 18:01
PAINT MIX	Raw Umber + Cerulean Blue + Quinacridone Magenta
BRUSH	Round brush
TECHNIQUE	Circular and swirling strokes

Return to Raw Umber, Cerulean Blue, and Magenta. Use small circular and swirling strokes inside the clouds to create more volume.

Keep these changes subtle. We are not adding bright highlights yet. We are simply giving the clouds a little more shape and movement.

Step 10: Introduce the Pink Near the Horizon

VIDEO	Part 1 19:35
PAINT MIX	Quinacridone Magenta + Titanium White + a little Cerulean Blue
BRUSH	Round brush
TECHNIQUE	Soft pink near the horizon

Mix more Magenta with White and add just a little Cerulean Blue. Begin bringing this pinker color into the lower portion of the sky.

Carry only a few small hints upward into the clouds. This will help tie the lower sunset color into the rest of the sky.

Step 11: Darken the Lower Sides

VIDEO	Part 1 21:15
PAINT MIX	Pink mixture + more Cerulean Blue
BRUSH	Round brush
TECHNIQUE	Darker sides, brighter center

Add a little more Blue to darken the lower side areas. Keep the middle warmer and a little brighter.

Return to the pink through the center if needed. Once you are happy with this layer, let it dry before moving into the yellow and orange colors.

Step 12: Open Up the Yellow Sunset

VIDEO	Part 1 22:55
PAINT MIX	Naples Yellow + Titanium White; small touch of Quinacridone Magenta around the outside
BRUSH	Round brush
TECHNIQUE	Soft warm opening

Mix Naples Yellow with White and block in the main yellow opening. Add a little more Naples Yellow toward the center.

Add a small touch of Magenta around the outside of the yellow and blend the transition gently. Keep the brightest, cleanest yellow closer to the center of the glow.

Step 13: Blend the Warm Colors Into the Sky

VIDEO	Part 1 24:17
PAINT MIX	Quinacridone Magenta + Yellow Ochre + Titanium White
BRUSH	Smaller round brush
TECHNIQUE	Small horizontal strokes

Mix Magenta, Yellow Ochre, and White, then switch to the smaller round brush. Use small horizontal strokes where the yellow glow meets the surrounding sky.

As you move farther away from the yellow opening, add more Magenta. Let only a few small hints of the warm color travel upward.

Step 14: Trail Warm Clouds Into the Glow

VIDEO	Part 1 27:03
PAINT MIX	Yellow Ochre + Quinacridone Magenta
BRUSH	Smaller round brush
TECHNIQUE	Thin warm cloud trails

Use more Yellow Ochre and Magenta to create a few small cloud indications that trail into the sunset opening. Add a little water if the paint needs to move more easily.

Spread the light outward gradually. Do not worry if the yellow gets softened a little. We will come back and strengthen it.

Step 15: Tape Off and Block In the Lower Half

VIDEO	Part 1 29:12
PAINT MIX	Cerulean Blue + Raw Umber + Quinacridone Magenta
BRUSH	Larger brush
TECHNIQUE	Dark block in

Once the sky is dry, tape off the lower portion of the painting. Try to keep the tape line even and make sure no white canvas is left showing along the edge.

With a larger brush, mix a dark gray from Cerulean Blue, Raw Umber, and Magenta. Paint downward and away from the tape to help prevent bleeding. This is just a base layer, so keep it simple.

Step 16: Begin the Second Sky Layer

VIDEO	Part 1 31:54
PAINT MIX	Cerulean Blue + Raw Umber + Quinacridone Magenta + Titanium White
BRUSH	Round brush
TECHNIQUE	Soft cloud shadow layer

Return to Cerulean Blue, a little Raw Umber, a little Magenta, and White. Let this mixture lean slightly more toward Magenta.

Add another layer to the clouds, concentrating more of the shadow color along their lower portions. Keep the edges soft and let some of the blue gray work down into the purple area.

Step 17: Add More Blue Gray Variety

VIDEO	Part 1 34:37
PAINT MIX	Cloud mixture with more Cerulean Blue; openings: Titanium White + Cerulean Blue
BRUSH	Round brush
TECHNIQUE	Layer and reopen

Shift the mixture slightly more toward blue and add another light layer. Then use White with a little Cerulean Blue to reopen a few of the lighter sky passages.

Try to keep some variety throughout the sky. Some areas should feel cooler and bluer, some warmer, and some lighter.

Step 18: Bring Back the Cloud Volume

VIDEO	Part 1 36:39
PAINT MIX	Cloud color + Titanium White + more Quinacridone Magenta
BRUSH	Round brush
TECHNIQUE	Swirling volume strokes

Return to the cloud color and add a little White and more Magenta. Use swirling strokes to bring some volume back into the shadowed clouds.

If an area gets too light, simply darken it back down. These are small reflected light changes, not bright highlights.

Step 19: Strengthen the Sunset Color

VIDEO	Part 1 38:58
PAINT MIX	Quinacridone Magenta + a little Titanium White
BRUSH	Round brush
TECHNIQUE	Soft scrubbed sunset color

Mix Magenta with a little White and scrub the color gently through the lower portion of the sky. Let a few small hints work upward into the clouds.

Increase the Magenta as you get closer to the horizon. Keep the color that travels upward much softer.

Step 20: Reestablish the Yellow Light

VIDEO	Part 1 40:31
PAINT MIX	Naples Yellow + Titanium White; outer transition: Quinacridone Magenta + Titanium White
BRUSH	Smaller brush
TECHNIQUE	Bright center fading outward

Switch back to the smaller brush and mix Naples Yellow with White. Open up the lighter yellow area again and make the center slightly more saturated with Naples Yellow.

As you move outward, let the color become darker and warmer. Bring in Magenta and a little White, then let a few thin traces of that warm color move upward through the clouds.

Step 21: Soften and Extend the Warm Bands

VIDEO	Part 1 44:37
PAINT MIX	Yellow Ochre + Quinacridone Magenta + Titanium White; then Naples Yellow + Titanium White
BRUSH	Smaller brush
TECHNIQUE	Soft bands of reflected light

Use Yellow Ochre, Magenta, and a little White to soften the area around the sunset glow. Clean the brush and return to Naples Yellow and White to brighten the center again.

Extend a few small bands of yellow light along the bottoms of the clouds and outward from the main glow.

Step 22: Add Another Layer of Cloud Texture

VIDEO	Part 1 47:33
PAINT MIX	Cloud color + more Titanium White + touch of Cerulean Blue
BRUSH	Round brush
TECHNIQUE	Subtle reflected light

Return to the round brush and cloud color. Add a little more White and, if needed, a touch more Cerulean Blue.

Add another subtle layer of reflected light and volume. Use the same color to create a few small break off shapes around the open sky areas.

Step 23: Brighten the Middle Pink

VIDEO	Part 1 49:27
PAINT MIX	Quinacridone Magenta + Titanium White
BRUSH	Round brush
TECHNIQUE	Very light pressure

Mix Magenta with White and add a slightly brighter pink through the middle section.

Carry a small amount higher into the sky with very light pressure. Keep those higher marks subtle.

Step 24: Finish the Yellow Glow

VIDEO	Part 1 50:55
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PAINT MIX	Naples Yellow + a little Titanium White; Quinacridone Magenta farther outward
BRUSH	Small brush
TECHNIQUE	Saturated center with warmer transition

Switch to the small brush and use Naples Yellow with just a little White. Extend the yellow slightly and gradually make the center more saturated.

As you move farther away from the center, add more Magenta. Finish by adding a little White and placing a few touches of light along the very bottoms of selected clouds.

Part 2 | Water, Rocks, Reflections and Final Details

Now that the sky is established, we can move into the water and foreground. Keep using the same approach: start with the larger color relationships, then refine the waves, rocks, reflections, foam, and highlights a little at a time.

Step 25: Establish the Purple and Magenta Water

VIDEO	Part 2 0:40
PAINT MIX	Cerulean Blue + Quinacridone Magenta; then Titanium White + Quinacridone Magenta
TECHNIQUE	Loose color block in

Mix Cerulean Blue with Magenta and add a little water. Start toward the sides with a mixture that leans more purple, then add a few purple strokes on the opposite side as well.

Shift toward Magenta around the edges of the purple. Closer to the sunset reflection, use White and Magenta. Let the foreground stay darker while you softly blend the transitions.

Step 26: Set the Direction of the Reflections

VIDEO	Part 2 3:16
PAINT MIX	Cerulean Blue + Quinacridone Magenta; then Quinacridone Magenta + Titanium White
TECHNIQUE	Diagonal reflected strokes

Return to Cerulean Blue and Magenta and add diagonal strokes moving downward through the water.

Shift toward more Magenta and White as needed. If it gets too bright, darken it back down. Around 5:07, remove the tape.

Step 27: Paint the Distant Hill

VIDEO	Part 2 5:40
PAINT MIX	Existing mixture + Raw Umber + Cerulean Blue + tiny touch of Titanium White
TECHNIQUE	Muted distant landform

Add Raw Umber and more Cerulean Blue to the existing mixture, along with only a tiny touch of White. Use this muted color for the distant hill.

Around 6:36, add a little more Blue. For darker sections, add more Raw Umber and Blue. Keep the distant shape simple.

Step 28: Mix a Muted Earth Color

VIDEO	Part 2 8:01
PAINT MIX	Raw Umber + Titanium White + existing palette colors
TECHNIQUE	Value adjustment

Mix Raw Umber and White into some of the colors already on the palette. If it becomes too bright, add more Raw Umber to bring the value back down.

Do not be afraid to correct a mixture. It is much easier to adjust the value now than to fight a color that is too light throughout the painting.

Step 29: Establish the Rocks

VIDEO	Part 2 9:57
PAINT MIX	Raw Umber + Cerulean Blue + a little Quinacridone Magenta
TECHNIQUE	Block in rock masses

Mix Raw Umber, Cerulean Blue, and a little Magenta. Block in the main rock shapes and let a few of them extend out into the water.

Darken some of the water immediately around the rocks and blend it softly. Around 12:57, pull a little of the rock color downward into the water so the rocks feel connected to the scene.

Step 30: Begin the Warm Water and Foam

VIDEO	Part 2 13:56
PAINT MIX	Quinacridone Magenta + Titanium White + small amount of Yellow Ochre
BRUSH	Small brush
TECHNIQUE	Loose swirling strokes

Switch to a small brush and mix Magenta, White, and a small amount of Yellow Ochre. Around 14:46, add a little water, more Magenta, and a little more Yellow Ochre.

Work back and forth with loose, swirling strokes. Do not try to draw every little piece of water. Let the brushwork suggest the movement.

Step 31: Establish the Waterline

VIDEO	Part 2 16:46
PAINT MIX	Previous mixture + Cerulean Blue; adjust with Quinacridone Magenta and Yellow Ochre
TECHNIQUE	Temperature changes along the waterline

Add Blue to the previous mixture and use the cooler color where the water comes up along the shore and around the rocks.

Move back and forth between more Magenta and more Blue as needed. Around 19:33, add slightly more Yellow Ochre. Near the sunset reflection, make the color a little lighter without letting it become too yellow.

Step 32: Break the Color Around the Rocks

VIDEO	Part 2 21:19
TECHNIQUE	Broken color

Let small areas of warmer color peek through behind and around the rocks. Break the color into smaller pieces instead of making one solid band.

Begin suggesting a few waves and openings in the water. Irregular shapes will make the shoreline feel much more natural.

Step 33: Create the Crashing Water

VIDEO	Part 2 22:11
PAINT MIX	Cerulean Blue + Quinacridone Magenta + Titanium White

TECHNIQUE	Curved strokes
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Mix Cerulean Blue, Magenta, and White. Use curved brushstrokes to show the water crashing and curling.

Around 24:35, add more Blue. Along the areas where the water is hitting, let the mixture become a little cooler. Around 25:09, use that cooler color for a soft bluish haze through portions of the water.

Step 34: Bring In the Sand Color

VIDEO	Part 2 25:43
PAINT MIX	Raw Umber + Titanium White + Quinacridone Magenta
TECHNIQUE	Sand beneath shallow water

Mix Raw Umber, White, and a little Magenta. Use this muted color for the sand showing through the shallow water.

Do not cover everything evenly. Let pieces of the sand color show through. Around 26:43, return to Magenta and Blue and add more Blue when you need a darker mixture.

Step 35: Add Cooler Light to the Water

VIDEO	Part 2 28:07
PAINT MIX	Titanium White + Cerulean Blue
TECHNIQUE	Selective cool highlights

Clean the brush and mix White with a little Cerulean Blue. Add this cooler light selectively.

If it becomes too bright, darken it before continuing. A few lighter areas will be much more effective than making every wave equally bright.

Step 36: Push the Distant Waves Back

VIDEO	Part 2 29:23
PAINT MIX	Cerulean Blue + Quinacridone Magenta
TECHNIQUE	Very light brush pressure

Mix Cerulean Blue and Magenta. Use very light pressure to add a few subtle wave indications farther into the distance.

Keep these marks smaller and softer than the waves closer to us.

Step 37: Build the Sunset Reflection

VIDEO	Part 2 30:31
PAINT MIX	Quinacridone Magenta + Yellow Ochre + Naples Yellow; adjust with Titanium White + Magenta
TECHNIQUE	Concentrated warm reflection

Mix Magenta, Yellow Ochre, and Naples Yellow. If the mixture becomes too orange, add White and a little more Magenta.

Keep the brightest reflection closest to the sunset glow. As you move farther away, gradually add more Magenta. Around 34:17, lighten a few selected areas and add a little shimmer around 34:32.

Step 38: Add Fine Water Details

VIDEO	Part 2 34:53
PAINT MIX	Titanium White + Cerulean Blue
BRUSH	Liner brush
TECHNIQUE	Fine lines with softened edges

Switch to a liner brush and mix White with a small amount of Cerulean Blue. Add a few finer water lines and details.

If a line looks too hard, soften it. Around 35:38, lightly drag a finger over one of the lines to knock the edge back.

Step 39: Add Warm Light to the Rocks

VIDEO	Part 2 36:23
PAINT MIX	Yellow Ochre + Quinacridone Magenta
BRUSH	Liner brush
TECHNIQUE	Selective warm edge light

With the liner brush, mix Yellow Ochre and Magenta. Add small touches of warm light along selected rock edges.

Around 37:11, suggest another layer of rocks catching the light. Keep these highlights restrained. You do not need to outline every rock.

Step 40: Strengthen the Reflections and Dark Edges

VIDEO	Part 2 37:43
PAINT MIX	Cerulean Blue + Quinacridone Magenta
TECHNIQUE	Dark separation beside foam

Return to Cerulean Blue and Magenta and strengthen a few of the reflections.

Around 39:00, add a darker section where the foam meets the water. That darker value will help the light foam stand out without needing a hard outline.

Step 41: Refine the Foam

VIDEO	Part 2 40:06
TECHNIQUE	Controlled highlight adjustment

Lighten the foam slightly and then compare it to the rest of the painting. If it jumps out too much, darken it back down.

Build the foam gradually. It is very easy to make it too bright in a dark painting.

Step 42: Make the Rocks Look Wet

VIDEO	Part 2 41:29
PAINT MIX	Bluish highlight
TECHNIQUE	Cool wet highlights

Add a subtle bluish highlight to a few of the rock surfaces. This cooler light will help them look wet.

Around 42:12, lighten portions of the foam slightly. Around 42:30, add a few small flecks of foam against the rocks and keep them irregular.

Step 43: Lighten the Sand

VIDEO	Part 2 43:04
PAINT MIX	Existing sand mixture, slightly lightened
TECHNIQUE	Selective lightening

Return to the sand color and make it slightly lighter. Add it selectively where the shallow water and sand meet.

Keep the transitions broken so the sand still feels like it is underneath the moving water.

Step 44: Extend the Sunset Reflection

VIDEO	Part 2 43:36
PAINT MIX	Yellow Ochre + Quinacridone Magenta + Titanium White
BRUSH	Flat brush
TECHNIQUE	Extend the warm reflection

Switch to a flat brush and mix Yellow Ochre, Magenta, and a little White. Extend the warm reflection farther down through the water.

Around 44:39, add a little more White. Around 45:16, add more Magenta. The farther you move away from the center of the reflection, the more Magenta you can introduce.

Step 45: Reveal the Distant Mountain

VIDEO	Part 2 47:29
PAINT MIX	Yellow Ochre + a little Titanium White
TECHNIQUE	Subtle distant contrast

Add just enough light near the distant mountain to make the shape a little easier to see. Do not outline it strongly.

Around 47:52, mix Yellow Ochre with a little White and add only a few small touches of light.

Step 46: Step Back and Take a Look

VIDEO	Part 2 49:28
TECHNIQUE	Evaluate the whole painting

Move back from the painting and look at everything together. Check the balance of the light and dark areas, the strength of the reflection, and whether any section is pulling too much attention.

This is a good habit throughout any painting. Things that look fine up close can feel very different once you see the entire composition.

Step 47: Add the Brightest Hotspot

VIDEO	Part 2 49:54
PAINT MIX	Cadmium Yellow + Titanium White
TECHNIQUE	Small concentrated hotspot

Clean the brush and mix Cadmium Yellow with White. Use this brighter color for the small hotspot closest to the sunset glow.

Around 50:38, add a little more White if needed. Keep this area small. The brightest value will have more impact if you do not spread it everywhere.

Step 48: Add Flickers of Light

VIDEO	Part 2 51:08
PAINT MIX	Light highlight mixture
TECHNIQUE	Wider marks toward the viewer

Add a few subtle flickers of reflected light across the water. As these reflections come closer to the viewer, make the marks a little wider.

Keep the distant marks narrower and smaller. Around 52:43, if any highlight gets too bright, lightly rub over it with your thumb to soften it.

Step 49: Add the Final Rock Highlights

VIDEO	Part 2 53:14
PAINT MIX	Highlight mixture shifted slightly toward Yellow Ochre
TECHNIQUE	Minimal final accents

Add one final small highlight to a few selected rocks and shift the color slightly more toward Yellow Ochre.

Keep these accents minimal. A couple of well placed highlights will do more than putting light on every rock.

Step 50: Finish the Clouds

VIDEO	Part 2 54:35
PAINT MIX	Titanium White + existing sky/cloud color + Quinacridone Magenta; adjust with Cerulean Blue + White
TECHNIQUE	Swirling cloud volume strokes

Return to the sky and mix White with some of the existing sky and cloud color and a little Magenta. Adjust with additional Cerulean Blue and White as needed.

Use swirling strokes to add a final bit of volume to the upper clouds. Keep these changes subtle. Around 56:24, make a few selected areas slightly lighter and finish with a restrained final highlight around 57:34.

A Few Things to Remember

Build the Painting in Layers

You do not have to finish an area the first time you touch it. Establish the larger shapes and colors first, then come back to strengthen, soften, lighten, or darken them as the painting develops.

Keep the Light Under Control

Add White gradually. If something gets too bright, simply darken it back down. Saving the brightest values for the sunset and a few selected highlights will make them much more effective.

Use Warm and Cool Colors Together

The cooler blues, blue grays, and violets help the warmer Magenta, Naples Yellow, Yellow Ochre, and Cadmium Yellow stand out. That contrast is a big part of what gives the sunset its glow.

Let Your Brushstrokes Do Some of the Work

Use puffy and swirling strokes in the clouds, small horizontal strokes around the sunset, diagonal marks in the reflections, and curved strokes in the crashing water. The direction of the brush helps describe what you are painting.

Keep Distant Areas Softer

The distant hill, mountain, far waves, and some of the sky openings should stay softer and less contrasty than the foreground. Smaller, quieter marks will help create depth.

Make Adjustments as You Go

If a highlight is too bright, knock it back. If an edge is too hard, soften it. If a mixture is too light, add some darker color. These little corrections are a normal part of the painting process.

PAINTING TIP

Most importantly: Do not worry about copying every brushstroke exactly. Follow the overall sequence and pay attention to the value changes, color shifts, and direction of the brushwork. Make small adjustments as your own painting develops.